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SNEPP'S TRIALS

One day a couple of months ago, Frank Snepp sat down and wrote a love story. It was about a French woman and a CIA officer in Saigon.

It was a short piece of fiction, and Snepp showed it to a magazine. The magazine was interested in publishing it.

But first, Frank Snepp had to show the 23-page story to Federal Judge Oren Lewis in Alexandria, Virginia. Because of a Lewis ruling last summer, Snepp has to show anything he writes that has anything to do with the CIA to the judge. The judge denied permission to publish the story.

Because of that same summer ruling, Snepp can't even talk about his CIA duties in Saigon; in addition, the judge took away the earnings from Snepp's best-selling expose of the CIA's retreat from Vietnam, *Decent Interval*. The money is now in escrow.

Last week, Snepp and his ACLU attorney, Mark Lynch, appeared in a Richmond, Virginia, appeals court to ask that Lewis's ruling be overturned.

One question in particular mystified one of the three appeals judges: "With the government conceding that there has been no divulging of classified information (in the book) ... what is it we are trying to get at here?"

Government lawyers argued that "it is irrelevant that no classified information is in the book." They said the issue was that Snepp violated his oath not to publish material about the CIA without final review by the agency.

Snepp's attorney told the *Phoenix* last week that the hearing "went fairly well."

There's no way to anticipate when the court will issue a decision. They're a law unto themselves.

Two weeks ago, meanwhile, the CIA announced it had fired an arms specialist who had been leaking classified information to a member of Senator Henry Jackson's staff. Jackson is critical of the SALT negotiations. No legal action would be taken against the CIA man, the agency said.

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